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ABSTRACT

The study describes ten discussion activities designed to improve the communicative abilities of Japanese learners of English based on cultural instruction goals. The activities target intermediate and advanced students, but teachers can modify the lessons for false beginners. All exercises stress speaking and listening. They focus on topics related to Japan, requiring students to explain aspects of Japanese culture and compare them with North American customs. For each activity, the report provides the following information as appropriate: level (beginner, intermediate, or advanced), time required, cultural theme, language skills, materials needed, procedures, remarks, and acknowledgement. The study provides content of handout materials and appends a brief bibliography. (MSE)

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Discussion Activities to Increase Intercultural Communication Skills for Japanese Learners in EFL

Brant M. Kresovich

INTRODUCTION

The relatively new field of intercultural communication studies the interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds (Hirai, 1988b). In the twenty years since its emergence as an area in communication theory, intercultural communication has attracted much scholarly attention (Okabe, 1988). Scholars in Japan and America particularly have taken interest in this field because the number of commercial, educational, and cultural exchanges between these two nations have increased to a great extent (Bowers, 1988). Evidence for this increased interest can be found in the proliferation of books and papers comparing Japanese culture with those of the West (Hirai, 1988a).

Knowledge from the area of intercultural communication is also being used for the purposes of teaching and training. Various methods have been developed over the past decade to impart cultural information to those who need or want it. Brislin, Landis, and Brandt (1983) list six types of useful methods, three of which are practicable for a foreign language setting. The first method provides learners with background facts about a culture. The second, called attribution training, focuses on explanations of behavior from the host nationals' point of view. These explanations include information concerning the personality traits, attitudes, behavior, value systems, and traditional thought patterns of members of a culture. The third method is called the cultural awareness approach and seeks to teach the differences

and similarities between the learners' own culture and a target culture. Perhaps this method is the first means of intercultural instruction that occurs to many teachers in EFL/ESL, but it is only one of a number of approaches at their disposal.

Concerning the aims of these various teaching methods, Seelye (1984) suggests seven goals of cultural instruction. Students should understand and demonstrate knowledge of the following points: 1) the sense, or functionality, of culturally conditioned behavior; 2) the interaction of language and social variables (age, sex, social class, etc.); 3) conventional behavior in common situations; 4) cultural connotations of words and phrases; 5) the evaluation of statements (e.g. stereotypes) about another culture; 6) how to locate and organize information about another culture; 7) the development of sympathetic and other positive views of a target culture, its people, and its language. As Ishii (1988) points out, these goals are clear and reasonable objectives to consider while designing whole classes and individual lessons.

PURPOSE

The fundamental aim of this paper is to present discussion activities designed to improve the students' communicative abilities through exercises based on Seelye's seven goals of cultural instruction. The activities are designed for intermediate and advanced students for the most part, but teachers can use some of them with Japanese false beginners with modifications such as using more time to explain new vocabulary, and providing patterns and routines for expressing opinions, agreeing, disagreeing, and other functions. All the exercises stress speaking and listening, rather than reading and writing, because most Japanese learners of English need practice in the former rather than the latter skills.

The discussion activities presented here tend to focus on topics related to Japan. The first reason is that although learners of English in Japan

often evince an interest in the Western world (especially the USA), they do not have much concrete knowledge of it; therefore, because learners are more familiar with Japanese culture, they can talk more about topics related to it and so have more productive and lively discussions to improve their English ability (Nicholson & Sakuno, 1982). A second reason for the emphasis on Japanese topics is that it challenges learners to use their English ability to its utmost. It is often so difficult to explain one's own culture in a foreign language that one must call upon all of one's resources in a second language. A third reason is that attempting to talk about unfamiliar topics (e.g. a typical North American lunch, how Americans express compliments, how Americans use checks and credit cards, etc.) with a foreign teacher in a foreign language is stressful so some students cannot communicate smoothly (Nicholson & Sakuno, *ibid.*). At least one of these three stressful factors may become less burdensome when the topics are about familiar subjects. Most importantly, the last reason is that because Japan is still isolated from the world in various ways, educated Japanese may want to develop their ability to explain their customs to culture-shocked foreigners who now live in Japan in ever-increasing numbers. For many different language groups and nationalities, learning Japanese is time-consuming and difficult so while they are in the midst of that long and grueling process, they often use the international language of English to obtain information on Japanese customs from the Japanese. Therefore, thinking Japanese should be able to explain some important patterns of Japanese culture to foreigners who have little or no ability to speak Japanese. When the Japanese who need or desire to have commercial, educational, or cultural contact with foreigners can explain the salient components of Japanese culture smoothly, this ability will probably help alleviate Japan's public relations problems in some small but personally satisfying and important ways.

THE ACTIVITIES

The following speaking and listening activities were developed to give Japanese learners practice in comparing and contrasting their culture with that of North America. The overall cultural aims of the exercises are based on Seelye's seven goals of cultural instruction and specific tasks to reach those goals are mentioned in the individual activities. The rubric "Language Skills" indicates the language function the students should practice during the activity. Because many recent textbooks are arranged by function, the arrangement of this paper may be most useful for other teachers. Of course, some might not use a textbook so examples of expressions for these conversational functions are given in the Appendix. These expressions can be introduced by writing them on the board and practicing them with a pattern practice (mimicry-memorization) drill. These activities were suggested by many sources so acknowledgments are given; however, none is given when the activity was developed on my own. The activities were used with intermediate and advanced students at the University of the Ryukyus and the Okinawa Prefecture Language Center. The presentation format of the following exercises is based on the resource books for teachers by Klippel (1984) and Nolasco & Arthur (1987).

Most language learners know little of anthropology or intercultural communication so the first series of exercises is designed to help them become aware of the cultural influences on most of our behavior patterns. Thus, Seelye's first goal of cultural instruction is to instill an understanding that culture is the "sum total of ways of life of a people" (Hall, 1959) that provides ways to fulfill basic physical and psychological needs.

I. WHY ARE THEY ACTING THAT WAY?

LEVEL: All. TIME: 30 to 40 minutes.

CULTURAL THEME: Students will discuss behavior which is culturally

patterned. LANGUAGE SKILLS: Describing. Making conjectures.

MATERIALS: Students check magazines and newspapers for pictures that depict Japanese engaged in some customary activity. They bring it to class.

PROCEDURE: The teacher explains that the students will describe the activity in their pictures and give a reasonable explanation for it. The teacher should stress that alternative explanations are welcome. This activity should stimulate a number of possibilities. Each student holds up his or her picture and explains it. The student should mention what physical or psychological need is being met in the picture. The teacher should elicit alternative explanations from other students. Continue this procedure until all the students have presented their pictures. Finally, the students can select one of the more provocative pictures and discuss which explanation is the most realistic or unrealistic. Students should be encouraged to see human activity more objectively and develop their ability to generate many possible explanations for various behaviors.

REMARKS: Of course, some students will not bring a picture so the teacher should bring some to supply the forgetful. At first, students may have difficulty in explaining such customary behavior because, to them, the reasons behind it are so obvious and natural. However, it should be explained that what is clear to them is not even noticed and must be explained to those not familiar with Japanese culture. The students will realize that even a photograph of an ordinary scene will stimulate much speculation. For example, a snapshot of high school students in their uniforms can raise discussion of dress codes in Japanese schools. Students will be encouraged to see human activity more objectively and develop their ability to generate many possible explanations for behavior. Finally, the teacher may want to collect and retain the pictures to use them for other classes and assignments.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: This activity was suggested by Seelye, 1984.

II. JAPANESE HOLIDAYS

LEVEL: All. TIME: 30 to 40 minutes.

CULTURAL THEME: Students relate familiar events and activities to what they have learned about how culture provides choices for satisfying various needs. LANGUAGE SKILLS: Giving reasons. Describing processes. Expressing opinions. MATERIALS: Optional hand-out.

* HAND-OUT *

1. What is an example of a major holiday in Japan?
2. When does this holiday occur?
3. What kind of ceremonies do people perform in their homes to celebrate this holiday?
4. What ceremonies do people perform outside their homes?
5. Are certain games associated with this holiday?
6. What kind of music, song, or dance is associated with this holiday?
7. What superstitions are associated with this holiday?
8. What foods are associated with this holiday?
9. What kind of clothes are associated with this holiday?
10. Do people give each other special gifts for this holiday?
11. Are any special flowers, plants, or trees associated with this holiday?
12. Are any colors associated with this holiday?
13. What other relevant information can you give about this holiday?

PROCEDURE: The teacher elicits the major holidays and seasonal events in Japan, and writes them on the board. The teacher then distributes the hand-out or writes the questions on the board. In groups of two to four, students discuss the answers to the questions. During the group discussion one member takes short notes and so focuses conversation. Depending on the size of the class, some groups can present their answers to the class. The teacher should collect the completed notes.

REMARKS: Many groups will choose New Year and O-Bon, which are fruitful to talk about, but the teacher can also encourage groups to discuss other holidays. For example, the Golden Week holidays can be discussed

together. Or, what I call the Rites of Passage holidays (Coming of Age Day, January 15; Children's Day, May 5; Respect for the Aged Day, September 15; Shichi-go-san, November 15) can be discussed as one holiday. Lastly, seasonal events, such as summer festivals, O-Chugen, or year-end parties can be discussed.

III. GESTURES IN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE

LEVEL: Intermediate to advanced. TIME: 15 to 20 minutes.

CULTURAL THEME: Students will learn non-verbal behavior is also culturally patterned. LANGUAGE SKILLS: Recognizing and producing common gestures in English. Explaining. MATERIALS: Optional hand-out.

* HAND-OUT *

1. Hand behind ear = Say it again.
2. Index finger touching lips = Be quiet.
3. Index finger turning in a circular motion at the side of the head = You are crazy. It is crazy.
4. Shaking index finger up and down = You should be ashamed.
5. Index and middle fingers crossed = Good luck.
6. Making a circle with thumb and index finger = Okay.
7. Shrug shoulders = I don't know. I don't care.
8. Thumb pointing up = Good.
9. Thumb pointing down = Bad.
10. Tapping foot. Drumming fingers = I'm bored.
11. Snap fingers = I forgot something!
12. Cut throat with index finger = Trouble.

PROCEDURE: The teacher demonstrates a gesture and elicits what it might mean. There may be a number of interpretations, which is all to the good because it shows students' increasing ability to generate explanations for observed behaviors. The teacher demonstrates about 12 gestures, and defines them. The hand-out, if any, can be distributed at this point. In groups of two to four, the students must demonstrate and explain gestures used in Japan. A variation of this exercise is in Nolasco & Arthur (1987).

It has 12 illustrations of gestures used in the UK and students must guess the meanings.

REMARKS: Students of all levels enjoy this activity. However, it should be stressed that some gestures can provoke unpleasant reactions so students should not use them if unsure about their propriety. Young learners especially must be warned never to imitate insulting gestures they see in American films.

According to Seelye, the second goal of intercultural instruction is to help students understand that cultures have rules that govern the interaction of language and behavior with various social variables. Students should begin to comprehend how age, sex, and social class influence how those in a given culture act and speak. The following exercises are quite demanding in that they require clear explanations for Japanese behaviors which are so ordinary that few Japanese give them a second thought; indeed, some of the behaviors are simply labelled "natural" and assumed to be shared by the rest of the human species.

IV. SOME RULES OF COMMUNICATION AMONG THE JAPANESE

LEVEL: Intermediate to advanced. TIME: 30 to 40 minutes.

CULTURAL THEME: Students will discuss rules of communication among the Japanese. These speech act rules are applied unconsciously so this exercise will be a challenge for the students. LANGUAGE SKILLS: Expressing opinions. Making conjectures. Agreeing/disagreeing. MATERIALS: Hand-out.

* HAND-OUT *

Joseph Sabo is an American who teaches English at a Japanese university. He is often confused by the ways of communicating which some Japanese have. Read the following incidents and try to explain why the Japanese students did what they did.

(1) In class Joseph asks students questions. When he calls on some students (especially young women), they smile, shake their head, and stay silent. Why do they smile?

(2) Joseph encourages his students to visit him in his office. However, almost none of his students accept these invitations. He is confused because he feels the students like him and regard him as kind. Why doesn't anybody visit?

(3) After Joseph explains some point in class, he asks if anybody has any questions. The students look at their watches, at their fingernails and at the floor. They look out the window. They stare back with stone faces. Joseph asks again, but nobody asks questions. Why not?

(4) At many Japanese universities, students sit on benches behind long tables. Usually three students sit on each bench. This does not lead to much chatter, but when Joseph asks one student a question, the other two at the same bench will try to help. Students discuss the answer and it takes a long time to get an answer. American students at universities almost never do this, and Joseph wonders why Japanese students do it.

(5) Joseph has a conversation class at the university. One of his biggest problems is that some students never try to speak English. Why do some Japanese students only speak in Japanese in English Conversation class?

PROCEDURE: The teacher explains that every culture has rules of communication that govern the participants, conditions, and content of conversation. The teacher distributes the hand-out and asks for explanations for the communicative behavior of the Japanese in the stories. The teacher calls on individuals to read the stories aloud and any vocabulary questions are dealt with. Pairs and trios discuss the incidents and it is not necessary to reach a consensus. The teacher should circulate and note what answers and opinions are being offered, rather than giving his or her own views or explanations. The teacher should focus their attention if they wander off the track. Each pair or trio then presents their explanations to the whole class. The teacher should emphasize that communication rules vary from culture to culture.

REMARKS: This activity may be difficult for the students at first because

it involves communication behavior (such as the uses of silence) they have probably never contemplated before. Thus, shallow explanations such as "The students are shy" may abound at the beginning. In such cases, the teacher should encourage explanations for this shyness. This often leads to discussions of *enryo* (polite hesitation) and the roles of social status in Japan. It is very important for each pair or trio to present their ideas to the class because this leads to more active discussion.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: This type of exercise is similar to the Critical Incidents presented by Weeks, Pedersen, and Brislin (1979).

V. MARRIAGE CONSIDERATIONS AMONG THE JAPANESE

LEVEL: Upper intermediate to advanced. TIME: 30 to 40 minutes.

CULTURAL THEME: The students discuss how gender differences may influence the choice of marriage partners in Japan. LANGUAGE SKILLS: Giving reasons. Expressing preferences. Agreeing/disagreeing. MATERIALS: Hand-out.

* HAND-OUT *

FACTOR	PERCENTAGE OF THOSE WHO CONSIDER THE FAC- TOR IMPORTANT	
	MEN	WOMEN
age	49	60
occupation	22	68
income	12	60
education	31	45
first marriage or remarriage	70	68
personality	90	93
appearance	73	62
health	88	89
ability/future prospects	50	72
values/attitudes	75	80
hobbies	25	30

prefecture	15	21
religion	20	21
personalities of partner's family members	31	25
partner's family assets	12	15
Will live with partner's family or not	20	45
Partner's family has/has no hereditary diseases	42	50

PROCEDURE: The teacher notes that people usually consider a number of factors before they decide to marry, and elicits some typical characteristics. The students will provide obvious qualities (income, personality, etc.) which the teacher should write on the board. The teacher should also write the rest of the considerations from the hand-out on the board. In pairs or trios, the students discuss their own five most important considerations. The teacher should listen to each pair and facilitate a smooth discussion. After 15 to 20 minutes of conversation, the teacher distributes the hand-out. As a class, discuss the differences shown on the chart and the reasons behind them.

REMARKS: This exercise never fails to generate much discussion because most people hold an opinion on marriage.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: The statistics are from a Ministry of Health and Welfare study and were reported in the September, 1986 issue of *Nihongo Journal*.

The third goal of intercultural instruction is that the students understand to what extent convention influences and shapes behavior. By studying commonplace social situations, learners can become more aware of their own cultural environment and more able to view other cultures with understanding and tolerance.

VI. APPROPRIATE TOPICS OF CONVERSATION

LEVEL: Intermediate to advanced. TIME: 15 to 20 minutes.

CULTURAL THEME: The students will discuss suitable topics of conversation in order to discover the rules that govern content of conversations in Japanese and English. LANGUAGE SKILLS: Giving reasons. Agreeing/disagreeing. MATERIALS: Hand-out.

* HAND-OUT *

Find a partner. Then check the questions you can ask a new acquaintance. Discuss the reasons for your choices.

1. What is your hobby?
2. How many years of schooling have you had?
3. What do you do?
4. Do you have a high salary?
5. Where do you live?
6. Who will you vote for in the next election?
7. How old are you?
8. What is your blood type?
9. Are you married (single)?
10. How many people are in your family?
11. Have you read any good books lately?
12. What do you think of US-Japan trade problems?
13. What a nice coat! How much did it cost?
14. Are you a Christian?
15. Do you have a lover?
16. Do you play any sports?
17. Do you like to travel?
18. Do you know of any good diet plans?
19. (to a woman) How large is your bust?
20. (to a single person) Why aren't you married?
21. How do you spell your name?

PROCEDURE: The teacher elicits topics that may be impolite in a conversation between acquaintances. Advanced students will probably give "sex, politics, and religion." The teacher then distributes the hand-out to pairs. They discuss and check the questions which are appropriate and talk about the reasons for their choices. The answers are discussed by the whole class. REMARKS: Students who have done this activity generally agree with the North Americans on what topics are suitable, so there are not many

surprises when the answers are discussed. However, the teacher should urge the learners to remember what subjects are acceptable and unacceptable because in the heat of conversation they may forget.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: Most of the questions were suggested by Ford & Silverman (1981), but numbers 7, 8, 14, 15, 19, and 20 were prompted by my direct and indirect experience in Japan.

VII. IRRITATING MANNERS OF SPEECH

LEVEL: Intermediate to advanced. TIME: 15 to 20 minutes.

CULTURAL THEME: Students will discuss speech habits that are apt to give a bad impression. They may compare North American and Japanese attitudes on this issue. LANGUAGE SKILLS: Agreeing/disagreeing.

Comparing. Giving reasons. MATERIALS: Optional hand-out.

* HAND-OUT *

Our voices and speaking style may impress our listeners even more than our appearance or message. So, in daily conversation, there are certainly some ways of speaking which can give our listeners a good impression. The following is a list of speech habits we should generally avoid.

- a. Using bad grammar.
- b. Speaking in a nasal whine.
- c. Using bad words or expressions (swearing).
- d. Interrupting.
- e. Speaking unclearly (mumbling).
- f. Speaking too softly (whispering).
- g. Speaking too loudly.
- h. Speaking in a high-pitched voice.
- i. Using some expressions too often (you know, uh-uh, etc.).
- j. Speaking too quickly.

PROCEDURE: The teacher gives introductory remarks similar to those on the hand-out above. The teacher should also stress that cultures have various rules that regulate how messages are transmitted (channel rules).

The teacher either writes all the irritating manners of speech on the board or distributes the hand-out. Pairs or trios discuss the five most annoying ways of speaking. Unanimity of opinion is not necessary. By asking for a show of hands, the teacher can survey informally how the class perceives these habits. The teacher can then give the results of the same survey performed with Americans. The results (from most to least irritating) were: d, c, f, e, g, i, b, j, a and h. Finally, the class can discuss the differences, if any, between the perceptions of the class and North Americans.

REMARKS: My experience with this activity has shown that most Japanese students will agree with the North Americans about interrupting, swearing, mumbling, and whispering. However, many Japanese students tend to regard "using poor grammar" as a disturbing habit. Thus, teachers should assure students that while grammatical sentences are important, North American may not be bothered so much by grammar errors of non-native speakers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: The poll was taken in the United States by an unknown speech expert in early 1988. She presented her findings on the Charlie Tuna radio program, and I took notes of the interview.

VIII. JAPANESE AND NORTH AMERICAN TABLE MANNERS

LEVEL: Intermediate to advanced. TIME: 30 to 40 minutes.

CULTURAL THEME: The students will compare the Japanese and North American conventions regarding table manners in order to understand how culture patterns even the most ordinary activities. LANGUAGE SKILLS: Comparing/contrasting. Giving examples. MATERIALS: Optional hand-out.

* HAND-OUT *

Here are some examples of American table manners. Below each instruction, write if the custom in your country is the same or different. If it is the latter, write how it is different.

1. In America, one should not lift any plates or bowls from the table while eating. One can raise only cups or glasses.
2. In America, it is bad manners to make noises while eating. Americans never slurp soup, tea, coffee, milk or water.
3. In America, it is very bad manners to eat with elbows on the table, or with an open mouth.
4. In America, it is bad manners to eat quickly and in silence.
5. It is not a good idea to put cream or sugar in anyone's coffee or tea. Never put ketchup or other condiments on another's plate.
6. In America, it is very impolite to pick one's teeth at the table. If this must be done, do it in the restroom.
7. In America, smokers should ask permission to smoke before lighting a cigarette. Never smoke when others are eating. Never use a dish as an ashtray.
9. In America, one should never comment on what or how much others have on their plates. Never talk about what someone has in his mouth.
10. In America, guests should compliment the meal and the efforts of the host and hostess.

PROCEDURE: The teacher elicits some comparisons of Japanese and foreign eating customs. The teacher distributes the hand-out. Individuals are called on to read each practice, and new words are explained either by other students or the teacher (the former is better, of course). In small groups, the students compare and contrast Japanese and North American table manners. One member of the group should take notes. Each group then reports the results of their discussion.

REMARKS: When this activity is presented, students always express great interest. Diversity among the students will be evident because families have idiosyncratic ways of eating.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: Most of the examples are from Sony Language Laboratory (1987).

The fourth goal of cultural instruction is to make students aware that even the most common words and expressions in a language have cultural connotations. Studying the relationship between culture and semantics can enable students to "visualize culturally appropriate images which the language evokes." (Seelye, 1984)

IX. COLORS IN WESTERN CULTURE

LEVEL: Intermediate to advanced. TIME: 30 minutes.

CULTURAL THEME: The students will compare the symbolic meanings of colors in Japan and the Western world. LANGUAGE SKILLS: Giving reasons. Giving examples. MATERIALS: Optional hand-out. A color chart is convenient.

* HAND-OUT *

Colors have many symbolic meanings. Our cultures teach us these meanings and we use them unconsciously.

Try to match the colors below with their symbolic meanings in Western cultures.

- | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1. black | a. wealth, money |
| 2. blue | b. unhappiness, grief |
| 3. gold | c. heaven |
| 4. purple | d. courage |
| 5. red | e. royalty |
| 6. white | f. purity |

In Western cultures, colors have even more meanings. Talk with a partner and try to match the color and the meaning. Discuss the reasons for your choices.

- | | |
|-----------|----------------------------|
| 1. green | a. water, sky, heaven |
| 2. blue | b. blood, bravery |
| 3. red | c. colorlessness, flatness |
| 4. black | d. sun, riches; cowardice |
| 5. white | e. virginity, purity |
| 6. yellow | f. authority |

- | | |
|-----------|----------------------------------|
| 7. purple | g. water, hope, spring; jealousy |
| 8. gray | h. death, underworld |

Different moods also bring to mind different colors—and vice versa. Try to match the color with the mood. Discuss the reasons for your choices.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. pastel colors | a. feminine |
| 2. red | b. calm, relaxed; cold, passive, masculine |
| 3. blue | c. exciting, passionate |
| 4. green | d. light, airy |
| 5. yellow | e. stable |
| 6. pure colors,
primary colors | f. light, kind; cowardly |
| 7. muted colors | g. hopeful, calm; jealous, envious |
| 8. pink | h. light, graceful |

Talk with your partner to choose what colors symbolize what weather, mood, and time in Japan and Western countries. What are the similarities? What are the differences?

SEASONS: Spring, summer, fall, winter.

WEATHER: Rain, fog, sun, wind, heat, cold.

TIMES OF DAY: Evening, night, dawn, morning, afternoon, sunset.

MOODS: Joy, grief, hope, fear, jealousy, calmness.

PROCEDURE: The teacher introduces the topic by saying that we learn the various symbolic meanings of color from our culture. As a group, do the first part of the hand-out so the class can practice for the next three sections. The answers in the first part are 1-b, 2-c, 3-a, 4-e, 5-d, and 6-f. Then, the students can pair up and do the next three sections together. The teacher should mix and help with any vocabulary, which is rather abstract in this exercise. The answers in the second part are 1-g, 2-a, 3-b, 4-h, 5-e, 6-d, 7-f, and 8-c. In the third part the answers are 1-d, 2-c, 3-b, 4-g, 5-f, 6-h, 7-e, and 8-a. The last part is more open to interpretation, but discussion will reveal various consistencies.

REMARKS: The difficulty of this exercise lies in the quite abstract vocabulary, but upper intermediate and advanced students usually comprehend

rapidly. Photographs from fashion and interior design magazines are effective visual aids.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: The basic information in this exercise is from McKelvey (1984).

The fifth goal of cultural instruction is to assist students to develop the ability to examine stereotypes and generalities about a culture critically. Ideally, students will be able to evaluate statements about another nation or culture objectively. The next exercise gives students an opportunity to state evidence for or against often-heard statements about the Japanese and North Americans.

X. JAPANESE AND NORTH AMERICAN STEREOTYPES

LEVEL: Intermediate to advanced. TIME: 30 minutes.

CULTURAL THEME: The students will learn to judge generalities about Japanese and American culture. LANGUAGE SKILLS: Giving reasons. Agreeing/disagreeing. MATERIALS: Hand-out.

* HAND-OUT *

Read the following stereotypes and use the following scale to mark each statement. A = probably true. B = probably false. C = I don't know.

JAPANESE PEOPLE

1. The Japanese are quite shy.
2. The Japanese care very much about their appearance.
3. The Japanese are very polite.
4. The Japanese eat strange food.
5. The Japanese are diligent and efficient.
6. The Japanese like silence so they don't talk much.
7. The Japanese are cold and unemotional so they don't laugh or smile much.
8. The Japanese take orders easily.
9. The Japanese live in rabbit hutches in overcrowded cities.
10. Japanese women are the nicest women in the world.

NORTH AMERICAN PEOPLE

1. Americans are aggressive.

2. Americans are individualists, so they hate to follow orders.
3. Americans are open, expressive, and direct. They like to argue.
4. Americans are workaholics.
5. Americans only think about money.
6. Americans think America is the best in everything.
7. Americans have the best technology in the world.
8. Americans are immature because they always want to be liked.
9. Americans are strict about time.
10. American husbands help their wives with housework like cooking and cleaning.

PROCEDURE: The teacher defines "stereotype/generality" and explains that many Japanese and American people accept them with little thought. The teacher gives the stereotype "Americans never eat fish" as an example of a myth that can be heard in Japan. The teacher elicits other stereotypes about Japanese or American people and writes them on the board. The teacher distributes the hand-out and has students choose partners to discuss the stereotypes both on the hand-out and the board. The teacher should stress that some stereotypes may have a grain of truth, but, while circulating, ought to encourage critical thinking. Finally, as a group, discuss the stereotypes and issues concerning the use or harm of stereotyping.

REMARKS: At first, students may hesitate to express stereotypes of North Americans to a foreign teacher. However, if the North American teacher volunteers some views (North Americans are tall, have blue eyes and blond hair and big noses, smell strange, laugh too loud, *ad nauseam*), students will relax and express some views they have heard or read.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: The idea was suggested by Seelye (1984), but I myself have collected the stereotypes I have heard from time to time.

The sixth goal of intercultural instruction is that students will develop skills to locate, develop, and organize information about a different culture. The aim of teaching research skills such as how to use a library and conduct

interviews has been dealt with in many other articles and books and so is beyond the scope of this paper.

The seventh and last goal is that students will develop curiosity and empathy toward another culture and people. It seems that if the previous six goals are fulfilled, this seventh will result as an outcome of positive attitude change. As Seelye (1984) points out, probably the best way to bring about this last goal is to send the students to live in another culture for a time, but since this is mostly impractical, having a member of another culture visit the class can be a rich experience for students.

CONCLUSION

This paper attempted to present 10 speaking and listening activities designed to increase students' skills in intercultural communication. There is, of course, the danger that students will be unimpressed, or, worse, use the information gleaned from these exercises to buttress already existing stereotypes and prejudices. Thus, it is essential for teachers to state clear objectives for each exercise and present a number of activities for each goal. The purpose of each goal and the knowledge (behavior) the students leave class with must be explicit in the mind of both teacher and students.

Finally, it is not possible to claim that the activities presented here will help all students in all situations reach objectives of cultural instruction established by the teacher. Other English teachers must carefully consider the age, interests, and language proficiency of the students before class and alter these activities accordingly. Thus, the first hope of this writer is that this paper will stimulate ideas, comments, and criticism from Japanese English professionals so that more effective and interesting exercises and materials can be developed. The second hope is that this paper will stimulate both native and non-native teachers and professors to continue to develop their own activities to increase students' communicative and cul-

tural skills. Other English professionals look forward to using them, and the cause of internationalizing Japan will be well-served.

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Appendix

The following list of expressions can be used to teach certain important functions of spoken English. Each function covers an aspect of communicative English that many non-native speakers have problems with. When students discuss the topics presented in this paper, they should be using expressions like the following.

GIVING OPINIONS

If you ask me ...
I think that ...
The point is ...
Would you agree that ...
As I see it ...

EXPRESSING AGREEMENT

I think so too.
I couldn't agree more.
That's a good point.
That's just (exactly) what I think.

GIVING EXAMPLES

First, second, third ...
First, then, next ...
For example, ...
For instance, ...

DESCRIBING PLACES

location
general appearance
unique qualities
atmosphere

EXPRESSING PREFERENCES: LIKE

I (really) enjoy ...
I've always liked ...
... is very enjoyable
I prefer ...

GIVING REASONS

Because ...
Since ...
... so that ...
Well, you see ...

COMPARING/CONTRASTING

Comparative forms
Superlative forms

EXPRESSING DISAGREEMENT

I don't know about that.
Don't you think that ...
You could be right, but ...
I'm not sure I agree ...
Well, that may be true, but ...

DESCRIBING THINGS

size
shape
color
material(s)
function

DESCRIBING PEOPLE

age
height, weight, build
face, hair
clothes
personality
job
hobbies
family

EXPRESSING PREFERENCES: DISLIKE

(I'm afraid) I don't like ...
I've never liked ...
I (really) hate (can't stand) ...
... isn't my favorite.

MAKING CONJECTURES

Perhaps ...
Possibly/Probably ...
... could/might/may well be ...
It's possible that ...
It's probable that ...

— ABSTRACT —

Discussion Activities to Increase Intercultural
Communication Skills for Japanese Learners in EFL

Brant M. Kresovich

This paper presents 10 speaking and listening activities to improve the intercultural communication awareness and skills of Japanese learners of EFL. The activities are based on Seelye's goals of cultural instruction as presented in his work *Teaching Culture* (1984). The exercises call for students to explain various aspects of Japanese culture and compare them with North American customs.